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Title: Analysis of Bilingualism and Multilingualism

Hello, everyone. My name is Wing Yi, Chu. The student number is 2308275. This is my ECEY4004 assignment Part 2 – Analysis of Bilingualism and Multilingualism.

First, let's delve into the benefits of bilingualism and multilingualism for children:

Bilingualism and multilingualism provide many benefits to children, and enhanced cognitive flexibility is thought to arise from bilingual individuals' constant need to navigate between two languages, which requires constant inhibition of one language while activating the other. Exposure to multiple languages from an early age stimulates language processing skills and may lead to more advanced vocabulary knowledge, grammatical understanding, and metalinguistic awareness. (Bialystok, 2018).

In our setting, we can see that a child can switch to multiple languages based on the environment and people. For example, when the grandparents picked him up at the nursery. He spoke in Mandarin to them, and when the parents came in the nursery then he spoke in English with them. He can pick up the languages more easily than the other children.

Learning two or more languages can strengthen a child's proficiency in all languages. Multilingual children tend to have a deeper understanding of language structures, grammar, and vocabulary in different languages (Yelland *et al.*, 1993).

Although Cummins (2000), explained that while bilingual individuals may possess certain cognitive advantages, there could also be trade-offs in terms of language proficiency and academic focus. Time spent developing proficiency in two languages may detract from other academic pursuits or extracurricular activities that could be equally or more beneficial for academic and career success. But Cummins *et al.* (2008), replenished that bilingualism opens doors to broader academic opportunities and career paths for children to prepare for the future. Proficiency in multiple languages enhances a child's competitiveness in the global job market and facilitates communication in multicultural environments.

Now, let's explore about in the UK, English as an Additional Language (EAL) plays a vital role in the education and inclusion of non-English speaking children.

Noam Chomsky and Jerome Bruner have contributed significantly to our understanding of language acquisition and development. Let's compare their theories in the context of home language acquisition for EAL learners.

While Krashen (1985) explained that Chomsky's theory emphasises innate linguistic principles underlying language acquisition. This implies that EAL learners may exhibit similar patterns of language acquisition as native speakers due to the underlying universal linguistic principles.

Bruner's theory underscores the importance of social interactions and environmental support. For EAL learners, this suggests that exposure to rich linguistic environments, supportive interactions with caregivers, and opportunities for meaningful communication are crucial for language acquisition and development.

Both perspectives offer valuable insights into understanding the process of home language acquisition for EAL learners, with implications for educational practices and interventions.

English as an additional language therefore helps to support the educational, social, and linguistic needs of non-English speaking children in the UK, ensuring their belonging, success, and inclusion in English-speaking communities (Demine, 2018).

These programs aim to bridge the language gap and provide additional assistance to students who may face linguistic barriers in the classroom. Offer opportunities for cultural exchange and celebration of diversity. Through EAL, students learn to appreciate and respect different cultures and backgrounds (Cummins, 2008).

Under the Department for Education (2023), EAL programs often involve family engagement activities to support the language development of non-English speaking children outside of school.

This is the importance of the EAL in the UK to supporting non-English speaking children. According to the research of Demine (2017), status the achievement of EAL pupils in the UK who are a group fully fluent and competent in English continues to be high above the English-only pupils.

Indeed, bilingualism or multilingualism has significant effects on brain development, especially in children. The process of learning and using two languages stimulates regions of the brain (Kuhl, 2010). Wernicke's area is a region of the brain which is associated with language comprehension. Research indicates that Wernicke's area plays a significant role in bilingual language processing, particularly in understanding and decoding language input (Kovelman *et.al.*, 2008).

Bilingual children develop neural networks specialised for processing and comprehending two languages. Kuhl (2010) discusses how bilingual experience leads to changes in neural networks, enhancing cognitive flexibility and language processing skills, and promoting neural plasticity.

Studies suggest that bilingualism or multilingualism may offer protection against age-related cognitive decline and neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's. Bilingual individuals, including those who acquired their second language in childhood, tend to exhibit delayed onset of dementia symptoms and better cognitive functioning in later life (Bialystok, 2007).

Through my color play activity in this ECEY 4004 – Part 1, we can see that the activity involves creating opportunities for children to explore, generate, and express ideas in multiple languages. Which activates proves children's divergent thinking skills.

In the activity I was asking questions that encourage children to think, make connections, and explore possibilities that encourage them to express themselves in both languages, fostering cognitive flexibility (Tabors, 2008).

The singing activity encourages children to sing in both languages and provides them with colour shape mats to inspire their connection and combine elements from different languages. Language mixing can spark creativity and encourage flexible thinking as children navigate between languages (Grosjean, 2010).

By incorporating these strategies into bilingual learning environments, educators can effectively activate children's divergent thinking and nurture their creativity, linguistic skills, and cultural awareness through bilingualism (García, 2014).

According to the Department for Education (2017), by embracing bilingualism within early years settings, educators can effectively promote the holistic development of children following the principles and goals of the Early Years Foundation Stage, fostering language acquisition, cultural understanding, and overall well-being.

Bilingualism supports the communication and language goals of the EYFS. Through interactions with caregivers, educators, and peers in bilingual or multilingual settings, children enhance their listening, speaking, and understanding skills in more languages. Children learn to communicate with speakers of different languages, promoting empathy, tolerance, and respect for diverse cultures and perspectives.

In our setting, we will promote different languages through festival activities like Chinese New Year, St Patrick's Day. Children learn different cultures with different languages through multilingual literature, music, and cultural activities, children gain insight into different ways of life and develop an appreciation for cultural diversity, aligning with the EYFS goal of promoting a broad understanding of the world.

Bilingualism or multilingualism supports promoting active engagement in language-rich activities and interactions which can be in outdoor play, movement activities, or sensory experiences, bilingual children develop language skills while also enhancing their physical coordination, strength, and well-being. Like as my activity, children they using their hands to tapping and caping.

In conclusion, bilingualism or multilingualism is a gateway to unlocking children's full potential and fostering holistic development in children. We were explored its profound benefits for children, English as an Additional Language (EAL) support in the UK, how bilingualism or multilingualism enhances brain development, fosters divergent thinking, and is linked with the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). These are all impacts on early years children's development.

Thank you for all your listening.

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